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# PAVED STREETS



ELIAS  
LIEBERMAN



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## **PAVED STREETS**



# PAVED STREETS

BY ELIAS LIEBERMAN



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**TO MY WIFE**



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## CREDO

I believe  
That there are greater things in life  
Than life itself;  
I believe  
In climbing upward  
Even when the spent and broken thing  
I call my body  
Cries " Halt! "  
I believe  
To the last breath  
In the truths  
Which God permits me to see.  
I believe  
In fighting for them;  
In drawing,  
If need be,  
Not the bloody sword of man  
Brutal with conquest  
And drunk with power,  
But the white sword of God,  
Flaming with His truth  
And healing while it slays.

I believe  
In my country and her destiny,  
In the great dream of her founders,  
In her place among the nations,  
In her ideals;

I believe

That her democracy must be protected,  
Her privileges cherished,  
Her freedom defended.

I believe

That, humbly before the Almighty,  
But proudly before all mankind,  
We must safeguard her standard,  
The vision of her Washington,  
The martyrdom of her Lincoln,  
With the patriotic ardor  
Of the minute men  
And the boys in blue  
Of her glorious past.

I believe

In loyalty to my country  
Utter, irrevocable, inviolate.

Thou, in whose sight

A thousand years are but as yesterday  
And as a watch in the night,

Help me

In my frailty

To make real

What I believe.

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# SOULS AND STREETS



## I AM AN AMERICAN

I am an American.

My father belongs to the Sons of the Revolution;  
My mother, to the Colonial Dames.

One of my ancestors pitched tea overboard in  
Boston Harbor;

Another stood his ground with Warren;

Another hungered with Washington at Valley  
Forge.

My forefathers were America in the making:

They spoke in her council halls;

They died on her battle-fields;

They commanded her ships;

They cleared her forests.

Dawns reddened and paled.

Stanch hearts of mine beat fast at each new star

In the nation's flag.

Keen eyes of mine foresaw her greater glory:

The sweep of her seas,

The plenty of her plains,

The man-hives in her billion-wired cities.

Every drop of blood in me holds a heritage of  
patriotism.

I am proud of my past.

I am an American.

I am an American.  
My father was an atom of dust,  
My mother a straw in the wind,  
To His Serene Majesty.  
One of my ancestors died in the mines of Siberia;  
Another was crippled for life by twenty blows of  
the knut;  
Another was killed defending his home during  
the massacres.  
The history of my ancestors is a trail of blood  
To the palace-gate of the Great White Czar.  
But then the dream came—  
The dream of America.  
In the light of the Liberty torch  
The atom of dust became a man  
And the straw in the wind became a woman  
For the first time.  
“ See,” said my father, pointing to the flag that  
fluttered near,  
“ That flag of stars and stripes is yours;  
It is the emblem of the promised land.  
It means, my son, the hope of humanity.  
Live for it—die for it!”  
Under the open sky of my new country I swore  
to do so;  
And every drop of blood in me will keep that vow.  
I am proud of my future.  
I am an American.

## BROTHERS

Noon in the park . . . A tropic sun  
Dazzles with light and chokes with heat.  
Sleepers about you . . . Notice one  
Stretching his length on a wooden seat.  
His face is blotched and puffy and seared,  
Sweat drips from the clammy skin;  
Flies romp on a stubble of beard,—  
A bundle of dirt with a soul therein.

Noon at the club . . . A welcome shade  
Dulls the light and cools the heat.  
Gentleman seated . . . Lemonade  
Dashed with cognac and something sweet.  
Arms dangling limply down,  
Feet tapping the polished floor . . .  
Yawning and stretching . . . No one in town . . .  
Not a soul . . . What a beastly bore!

## THE QUEST OF PIERROT

Wistful and pleading, white of face,  
He watches the crowd — like a dream — pass  
by;  
And now he pirouettes back a pace,  
And now he stifles the ghost of a sigh.  
But though, in the glare of the bluish light,  
Myriads drift to an oubliette  
Of vistas narrowing left and right,  
He looks in vain for Pierrette.

Tender and yearning and half afraid,  
Like a frightened fawn in a sudden shower  
Whom lightning dazes,  
He treads the mazes  
Of city streets,  
Pauses — retreats —  
Gazes amused at the burghers staid —  
Stops to admire the beauty or dower  
Fate has granted some winsome maid —  
But ever he shakes his head, ah no!  
There is only one for Pierrot.  
And her — Pierrette —  
In a lifetime span  
Though the world forget,  
He never ean.

Finger on lip and saucer eyes,  
He seeks in vain where violins,  
Like prophets false of paradise,  
Glorify man in his frailties and sins;  
Midas is there with his touch of gold  
And maidens, too, with smiles firm-set  
That flash no mirth but leave one cold—  
Alas! He finds no Pierrette.

Drooping, he stumbles to Thespis' mart  
Where genius jingles the lilt of the times;  
Or the times, perhaps, too crass for art,  
Demand nepenthe from mummers and mimes;  
He bows his head and weeps! What though  
The swaying chorus dazzles—yet  
No charm is there for Pierrot—  
He can not find his Pierrette.

Night—the stars—a city park—  
The shelter of boughs and a friendly seat—  
He thinks of her in the murmuring dark,  
Forgets his aches and his weary feet.  
The world will move in its trivial way,  
Will turn to dross its fume and fret  
And lose its soul—but ah! one may  
In dreams be ever with Pierrette.

## SOLDINI, VAUDEVILLE VIOLINIST

Dead men may tell no tales, but dead souls can;  
For when my turn is done, mine never fails  
To torture me with this: "Are you the man  
Whom Auer taught? Soldini! Ragging scales!  
Are you the boy whom Auer once caressed—  
His eyes so teary-soft—to whom he said,  
"Have patience, lad; through toil is genius  
blessed;  
Your day will come?" But night has come  
instead.  
Night after night they clap Soldini—me  
Who sold his hopes for dross, his dream for pelf.  
They clap Soldini? No! His travesty,  
His ghost, perhaps, great God, but not himself.

For gaping dolts I crucify my love.  
I syncopate the masters, beat the strings,  
Abuse my bow to please the gods above,  
The smoking gods, whose rapture stings  
Remorse to life again and drives my pride  
To penance—fool applause that lays a ban  
On hope and calls up all of me that died.

Dead men may tell no tales but I—I can.

## MY SHOEMAKER

Tap, tap, hammer; tap in cobbler time;  
Tap, tap, hammer; tap away the grime,  
Water-pail and boot-tree, shop of murk and must,  
Awl and thread and polish; tap away the dust;  
Tap away his tool and beneh, the scattered leather  
seraps.

My shoemaker is dreaming as he taps, taps, taps.

He dreams. . . .

It seems

While his hand keeps time to the beat, beat, beat  
His fancy wanders free;  
It scuds to the breath of his spirit-heat  
Like the spume of a wind-tossed sea.

Now gladly,

Now madly,

Now hauntingly,

Sadly

Over and over the infinite keys  
Of a wonderful organ he conjures from air,  
He fashions the rapturous melodies  
That, wafting above,  
    On wings of fire,  
    An angel choir,  
Now carol his gladness and now his despair;  
But most of all his heart's desire,  
    His plea for love,  
    His dream of love. . . .

Did not Vulcan, dull at his forge,  
Pause in his toil — listen — grow mute,  
A throb in his heart and a lump in his gorge,  
As he heard the music of Orpheus' lute?

In the little back room (the only one  
Besides his shop) no worries lurk  
To drag his soul from its chosen fun  
And hem it in with his daily work;  
Spring dwells eternal for here is set  
The solace for toil through the countless days,  
An ancient piano, a modern spinet;  
And on this my shoemaker plays — and plays.

He caresses her keys with toil-gnarled hands;<sup>78</sup>  
He woos her and wrings from her tinkling heart  
Murmurs of sympathy — she understands  
What love may yearn for and love impart.

Men seek the gleam as the years plod by,  
Dawns flush and wane and centuries lapse;  
In search of the Holy Grail they hie  
Like my valorous Knight of the Leather  
Scraps;  
And who shall say that the sacred gleam,  
The quest for which makes man sublime,  
May never appear in a cobbler's dream,  
Redeeming his soul from the dust and grime?

Smug with the fat of the world our souls  
Are lulled to sleep and often fail,  
As they blink their eyes at the money goals,  
To see beyond them the shining Grail;  
The gleam grows dim as the spirit lags  
And the solace of dreams may never be had  
By him who snores on his money bags,  
Though it come to the toiler with hammer and  
brad.

Tap, tap, hammer; tap in cobbler time;  
Tap, tap, hammer; tap away the grime,  
Water-pail and boot-tree, shop of murk and must,  
Awl and thread and polish; tap away the dust;  
Tap away his stool and bench, the scattered  
leather scraps,  
My shoemaker is dreaming as he taps, taps, taps.

## THE RETORT IMPOSSIBLE

The pronoun twins of repartee  
In Jokeland known as He and She  
Addressed each other angrily.

Said He: "I often long for wings;  
I'm tired to death of saying things  
That merely draw your witty flings."

Said She: "You need not say a word;  
A clothing dummy is not heard;  
Just be yourself to look absurd."

Though through his heart her answer tore,  
This, too, like other shafts, he bore;  
The Jokesmith had not written more.

## WHAT THE CITY SAID

Be not afraid, for if you are, — you die!  
    Of coward lives I daily take my toll;  
And only he who bravely scorns to fly  
    Perceives the god-like will of me, the soul.  
The craven whimpers, “ Lo! Four million men  
    And each one turns to me a face of stone.”  
If he but knew, he might take heart again,  
    For even they feel pity-starved, alone.

Be not afraid; for if you are, — you die!  
    The giants, ribbed of steel, that stretch their  
hands  
To grasp the stars, disdain an earth-born sigh;  
    Each mammoth pile the tomb of weaklings  
stands!  
But if, you trembling manikin, you’re bold,  
    Then — open sesame — there gleams revealed  
The wealth of Ali Baba’s treasure hold,  
    A robber store of gems and gold concealed!

Be not afraid; for if you are, — you die!  
    They call me Bagdad! Mark! The Calif’s knife  
Will stroke your neck before you dare to cry  
    To Allah that he spare your worthless life.  
Ah! Hear the Calif’s rage, his angry stamp;  
    He lowers dark at you; he means to kill.  
You laugh at him? He brings Aladdin’s lamp.  
    Salaam to you! What is my master’s will?

## THE PLAY LAST NIGHT

The play last night! It might have been  
    Of my own life the counterpart;  
My eyes went dim with tears unseen;  
    I heard a dirge within my heart.

Like me, the lass upon the stage,  
    Bereft of all that brightens life,  
Her faith and love, was left to wage  
    Against the world a losing strife.

Like me, she felt the gossip's tongue;  
    She bowed to babbling calumny;  
She argued with him, pleaded, clung;  
    He left her, too, as one left me.

But just before the curtain fell  
    I saw her shattered fortunes mend;  
He came to her—and all was well;  
    Alas! Not mine the happy end!

## THE RACING CAR

Meteors whiz through the waste of space,  
Planets course through the open sky;  
All the world at a blinding pace  
Madly whirls in a cosmic race,  
And so do I.

I bend to a rocking, swaying thing  
That hurtles on in a wake of fire;  
It croons to Death as I clutch and cling,  
But it sings the song of my heart's desire.

The breath of life  
Is speed and strife;  
A hero's meed  
Is strife and speed;  
Though pulses hammer and senses reel,  
Ecstasy dwells in my throbbing steel.  
Men must venture and men must die;  
We are creatures of destiny, you and I.

Masses of faces cover the bank;  
Murmurs of voices blend from afar;  
Master of lever, throttle and crank,  
I grind ahead in my lurching car.

I speed ahead like a spirit free,  
I leap for my goal like a god of the sun;  
The universe totters in frenzied glee  
Along with me—for the race is won!

## MY ALARM CLOCK

I doze. . . . I drowse. . . . It sings to me:  
“The dawn has flushed in the eastern sky!”  
I toss. . . . I blink. . . . It murmurs:  
“See!

There is much to be done ere the sun rides high.  
There is much to be done! My knight, arise!  
Adventure beckons for bold emprise;  
And Love lures on with dream-lit eyes.  
Burr . . . ing! Ting-a-ling-ling!  
Arms and the man I sing.”

It whispers low, “A maid, perchance,  
May need a valorous knight. Advance!  
Charge the dragon! Shiver the lance!  
Draw your sword! The beast may hold  
Besides the maid a store of gold.  
The world is full of gems and of hearts  
And he who first on the quest departs  
May have them all.

Ting-a-ling-ling!  
Arms and the man I sing!”

Thus might it speak! What it really does  
With spiteful rattle and maddening buzz  
Is this: “Again asleep, you shirk!  
Get up, get up, and go to work!”

## RUBAIYAT OF A FLAT DWELLER

Poor dub, awake! The neighbors' hoarse alarm  
Has robbed your morning doze of all its charm.

For lo! He sets the thing at half-past five,  
A frightful hour, to keep his job from harm.

And though, perchance, you need not rise till eight,  
What boots the will of man against his fate?

The waiter, misnamed dumb, will serve to shake  
With creak and buzz the sleep from any pate.

Each morn a thousand noises seems to bring;  
And though you writhe in bed and madly cling

To pillow, blanket, sheet,—no hope!

Your goat is got; you can not do a thing.

Alas, the milk is gone! No tracer shows  
Who take the stuff from you or whence it goes;

But he who lives below and takes your tips,  
He knows about it all, he knows, he knows.

Yes, that perverted tank you call the Jan-  
itor, who works the game to suit his plan,—

Look not to him for help, for he, mayhap,  
Has seething milk of yours within his can.

A janitor who scorns the vinous bough,  
A clock next door that cannot raise a row,

A flat without a phonograph next door,—  
Ah, any rooms were Paradise enow!

## FROM A BATTERY PARK BENCH

Giant-keeled, she flings the spray  
Lightly by in queenly scorn,  
As she passes from the bay  
Toward the mighty ocean borne.  
On to foreign lands and seas,  
Go, thou thing of steel and steam!  
Here upon my bench at ease  
I shall follow in a dream.

Then I shut my eyes and view  
Many queer, attractive sights—  
Waters colored turquoise blue,  
Phosphor seas on tropic nights,  
Dusky men in sandaled feet,  
Pattering their way along  
Through a narrow Eastern street  
Teeming with a noisy throng—

Cities, castles, colonnades,  
Winding rivers, foreign sods,  
Vast cathedrals, strange arcades,  
Moldy shrines of ancient gods,  
Storied nooks of all the earth,  
See I as I take my trip—  
Passage gratis, cabin berth—  
On the park bench, phantom ship.

## ROMANCE IN THE CITY

Before the dawn has paled the night's blue blur,  
 Romance takes wand in hand and starts her  
 quest  
 Like Ariel at Prospero's behest  
 To seek for hearts where men and women stir.

And no man knows the subtle trick thereof,  
 But when she halts a lad upon the street  
 And smiles at him, his heart begins to beat  
 A million songs whose mad refrain is love.

## JUNE: IT ALL DEPENDS

(*A reversible rime*)

Thy	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{scented} \\ \text{humid} \end{matrix} \right\}$	winds are wild with	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{glee} \\ \text{woe} \end{matrix} \right\}$
Thy	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{brilliant} \\ \text{swollen} \end{matrix} \right\}$	skies are	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{gay} \\ \text{dull} \end{matrix} \right\}$
O June, forever	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{stay with me} \\ \text{from me go} \end{matrix} \right\}$	with	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{mirth} \\ \text{dread} \end{matrix} \right\}$
I'll tune my lyre to	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} \text{sing thy birth} \\ \text{wish thee dead} \end{matrix} \right\}$		

### A PEDDLER IN THE SHOPPING DISTRICT

For hours you stand and watch the crowd, pell-mell  
Go bustling by. No call for buttons, laces!  
Why don't you scan those rigid, weary faces?  
They long for peace, but that you cannot sell!

### PASTEL

Autumn leaves in russet and brown,  
Autumn leaves in red and gold;  
The wind is shaking them trembling down  
Dank with fog and chilled with cold.

Little mounds on the wind-swept heath,  
Little mounds of russet and red;  
The ghost of a sigh and a hero's wreath  
For the Belgian lads whom the wind mourns  
dead.

## THE PIPES

(As Poe might have jingled it)

Hear the knocking on the pipes!

Frigid pipes!

With what agonies of terror

Now their metal presence gripes!

Hear the tenants beating, beating,

Begging for a little heating

From the pipes;

Hear them beating and entreating

For a scanty dole of heating

Bought and paid for,

Stopped and stayed for;

But the ghoul who lives below

And who battens on the tips

Listens calmly to the cadence

As it rises and it dips.

And he doesn't care a rapping

For the anxious tenants' tapping

On the pipes, pipes, pipes!

How he laughs,

How he chaffs,

As he keeps time, time

In a merry Runic rhyme

To the tintinabulations that in vain insistence

beat

For our rightful share of heat;

To the discords as they scream  
For our frugal need of steam  
From the pipes, pipes, pipes, pipes,  
Pipes, pipes, pipes—  
From the icy-hearted monster  
And his pipes!

## THE MODERN OMAR

## L'ALLEGRO: MIDNIGHT

A million lights flare up. . . . You seem divine. . . .  
Prismatic colors flood your fragile grace;  
Aurora crowns your hair and warms your face.  
Another glass! The world and you are mine!

## IL PENSERO: THE MORNING AFTER

Alas! The Song of Songs was never meant  
For dolts like me with souls and feet of clay;  
Next time it lures me on, I'll turn away.  
Some copper coins are left; the gold is spent.

## THE FLIGHT OF A SUNBEAM

I saw you throbbing,  
On mischief bent,  
As away you went,  
Brilliantly bobbing.

Your dance beguiling  
A little child  
With antics wild,  
He gurgled, smiling.

Flashing and flying  
On dress parade,  
You sought a maid  
And eased her sighing.

Glancing and gleaming'  
Athwart a youth,  
He glimpsed a truth  
Which set him dreaming.

Dazzling and whisking  
Before a mule,  
The solemn fool  
Kicked heels a frisking!

Gracefully veering,  
You charmed a sage  
To write a page  
Of humor cheering.

And gleefully springing  
Back to your skies,  
You gladdened my eyes  
And left me singing!

### THE VENDOR OF DREAMS

*“If there were dreams to sell!” — Beddoes*

Garbed in a motley suit,  
Waving a bladder of air,  
And crowned with a cap and bells,  
He looms in the thoroughfare;  
Enveloped in phosphor fire,  
Spectrally gaunt he seems  
As he offers his wares at the curb—  
A fantastical vendor of dreams.

“Oyez! From the storehouse of time,  
Beautiful, crystalline dreams,  
Reveries, fancies, and hopes,  
Suffused with the roseate gleams  
That play on a poet at birth  
And wimple at dawn of the day!  
Oyez! Ye women and men,  
Ye mortals of earth, oyez!

“ Here are the hopes that are dead,  
    Alive in your vanished youth;  
The glorious rule of the right,  
    The radiant triumph of truth;  
Power to do and to dare  
    Free to the weaklings of earth;  
Ambition attained at a bound—  
    Dreams of a fabulous worth!

“ Health for the tottering frame,  
    Blood for the cheek that is pale,  
Innocence, freshness of heart,  
    The fountain of youth is for sale!  
Love for the maid who is spurned,  
    Relief for a sob or a sigh;  
I am a vendor of dreams—  
    Buy! Buy! Buy! ”

## FROM A BRIDGE CAR

River inscrutable, river mysterious,  
Mornings or evenings, in gray skies or blue,  
Thousands of toilers in gay mood or serious,  
Workward and homeward have gazed upon you.

Swirling or sluggish, but ever inscrutable,  
Sparkling or oily, but never the same;  
You, like the city, mysterious, mutable,  
Tremble with passions which no one can name.

## THE TOWER

A magic symbol urging goals unwon,  
'Round which the rushing shadow falls;  
There profit lures, dreams dance, ambition  
calls,—  
Bagdad, Golconda, Camelot in one.

## THE CATHEDRAL

A vault of scattered stars is overhead;  
And, reaching hands of stone for stellar fires,  
The wingless monuments of man's desires  
Seem darting up — but cling to earth instead.

### DAWN IN THE CITY

A morning zephyr lifts the screen of gray  
That hides the stage and, like a show-  
man shrewd,  
He sets the light so that the prologue, viewed  
In rose, contrasts the garish acts of day.

### THE THEATRE CROWD

Oblivion or life? Both youth and age  
Pass brilliant-eyed within the playhouse door;  
And from it turn with echoed laughter; or  
In pensive mood, if life had crossed the stage.

### A STREET CROSSING

Like hunted game, now darting here, now there,  
They cross in haste the traffic-glutted street;  
Amidst the maze of cars and cabs their feet  
Go pitter-patter, hastening ever—where?

## WINTER NOCTURNE: SUBWAY EXIT

From underground come creeping forth the  
gnomes  
Who toiled by day to spin the cloth of gold  
On many looms. Anon, a gust of cold  
Attacks the rout and sweeps them to their homes.

## FONETIC

A wise philosopher obtained  
His doctorate degree.  
And being wise, he rendered it  
In language somewhat free:  
Instead of writing Ph. D.—  
To all persuasion deaf,  
He used the phonic substitute,  
And signed himself D. F.

## AT THE OPERA

Are you the lass I used to know—  
My barefoot girl of æons past;  
My nut-brown maid of long ago?  
Can this be you and I—mischief?  
In décolleté, and grandly pale—  
It seems so queer! But he that gave  
The gems you wear could hardly fail.  
A princess you, and I—a knave.

The music thrills you. Violins  
With muted strings can plead so well!  
You look at me—the charm begins  
To work—may God prolong the spell!  
Crescendo now my throbbing heart  
Would madly blot what happened since!  
I seem to play my rightful part,  
A princess you, and I—a prince.

The music dies; the lights flare up;  
A stranger helps you with your cloak;  
My lips have touched the bitter cup;  
I drain it, lees and all—I choke!  
The strains had led my wits astray,  
They spun a dream for me, your slave;  
But fate ordains another way,—  
A princess you, and I—a knave.

## A MAN OF LETTERS

When Clegg was young, the first degree  
He learned to blab was A. B. C.

In adolescence, formally,  
A college tagged on him A. B.

Another parchment came his way  
That dubbed the stolid grind M. A.

But on he plugged; oh, on plugged he,  
Until he nabbed the Ph. D.

In dreams he now began to see  
An honorary LL. D.

But then, alas! The end is sad,  
For poor old Clegg went raving mad.

Upon the walls incessantly  
He scribbles Clegg and X. Y. Z.

And P. D. Q. and Q. E. D.  
A literal calamity.

The keepers say he aims to get  
A corner on the alphabet.

## THE NATION TO ITS FOREIGN-BORN

*Make thee my knight? My knights are sworn to vows  
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness  
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love.*

Tennyson.

Front face! Are you prepared to do your part?  
Come here and tell me so; I know you can.  
Stand straight and answer squarely, heart to  
heart;  
You're not a grain of dust to step on, man!  
Look up! The truth! I mean to try you out  
When passion's heat is white, to search you  
through  
And see if anywhere there lives a doubt  
To whom and where your loyalty is due.

You're stanchly true? Then breathe a holy vow  
That, come what may, your soul will cling to  
me.  
I sheltered you, when first you came, and, now,  
I want your faith and deeds, if need there be.  
But if your thoughts go fondly back to where,  
A subject once, you ate your potted meat,  
Or where you scraped and bowed to kings, why  
there  
You must return. You cannot stand white heat.

There is no middle course for loyalty,  
And love should never waver. She who nursed  
Your brawn and brain and soul, who dubbed you  
free,  
Should stand alone in love, in duty first.  
All this you stand resolved to pledge anew?  
You call to witness Him that rules above?  
Then rise, Sir Knight, my future rests on you,  
On all your utter faith, your utter love!

THE BUZZING FLY

Buzz, buzz,  
Low, high,  
How I hate you,  
Little fly!  
Buzz, buzz,  
No rest;  
How I loathe you,  
Little pest!

Buzz, buzz,  
So plain,  
Ever at it  
On the pane.  
Swipe! I have you!  
No? Too bad!  
Missed again?  
I'm going mad!

Buzz, buzz,  
No peace;  
Will that buzzing  
Never cease?  
Now I've caught you!  
No! Too spry!  
Wait a bit,  
You nasty fly!

Buzz, buzz,  
    Fills my brain.  
Swat!  
What?  
    Broken pane!

### ON A FIFTH AVENUE BUS

Close-boarded, bar-crossed windows — blind façades!  
I cannot look within, but envy sees  
A world that is not mine and cushioned ease  
I may not share . . . all, all behind those shades.

Two maidens pure as dawn ascend the bus . . .  
And earth reels from me . . . Airily I soar . . .  
The one is laughing Youth forevermore;  
The other, Wonder, wide-eyed, tremulous.

Wild magic haunts the breeze, the open sky!  
I, too, am rich; I smell the greening sod;  
I lilt a song of soul-content to God;  
And on we travel . . . Wonder, Youth and I.

## INVITATION TO THE DANCE

Time: An autumn day

Scene: A wood

Characters:  $\begin{cases} \text{A cruel wind} \\ \text{A little leaf} \end{cases}$

**THE WIND** (boldly):

What maiden fancies make you blush  
This pretty red?

**THE LEAF** (reprovingly):

You rudeness, hush!

**THE WIND** (boisterously):

With dainty sighs I will caress  
Your crimson cheeks.

**THE LEAF** (timorously):

What brazeness!

**THE WIND** (sarcastically):

You're too demure! Will you, perchance,  
Come off your perch and try—a dance?

**THE LEAF** (shuddering):

A dance? Oh, no. Excuse me, please,  
I'm rather weak about the knees;  
I'm poor at tangoing, I fear.

THE WIND (suavely):

I'll teach you well, my trembling dear.

THE LEAF (fluttering):

Oh, sir! Be kind enough to wait!

THE WIND (blustering):

Regrets! I never hesitate.

Let's one-step then — come on — I'll blow  
Your scruples to the —

THE LEAF (falling):

Wind, I go!

## A LESSON IN VERSE

The editors gave B. A. Hack  
Five cents a word. He smote  
His hand upon his noble knob  
And this is what he wrote:—

“ Fain would the horned moon eftsoons  
Dart out beyond the cloud,  
Fain would its pointed points retreat  
Astern the opal shroud,  
While quiv’ring on the heaving sea  
The falling moonbeams fall,  
And shiv’ring on the rolling deep,  
Remember Neptune’s call.”

But when the editors resolved  
To pay him for the thought,  
The manuscripts of B. A. Hack  
A different message brought:—

“ A horned moon,  
A hind’ring cloud,  
A mad retreat  
Astern the shroud;  
On heaving seas  
The moonbeams fall  
And shiv’ring list  
To Triton’s call.”

A skillful master of his art,  
He later, with a frown,  
Tore up his first attempt and said  
He ought to "boil it down."

For, after all, the whole blamed thing,  
He thought in cynic glee,  
Can best be said — ah, noble head! —  
"The moon shone on the sea."

## THE KING OF LOVE

*Dedicated to Dr. Stanton Coit, founder of the University Settlement, Rivington and Eldridge streets, the first settlement in America*

The street is all a-throb with sleepless life.  
There beats upon the ear a mad refrain  
Of peddlers hawking wares. The very lights  
Of Rivington are blatant as the cries  
That blend into the thunder of the cars.  
A haggling crone berates a bearded Job  
Who curses loud and often at his fate  
Before he takes the stinted dole she gives.  
As if to mock the pair, a joyous strain,  
The lilting Czardas, filters through the hum  
From out a hall where two have plighted troth.  
Amid the rattle and the clamor of their lives  
A golden strand had slipped the loom of Fate.  
A boy is chanting ballads on the street  
And round about him gapes the idle throng  
Their mission stayed — to listen and to yearn  
For luring dreams of unattained desires,  
For life to fill the veins of still-born hopes.  
A Babel of confusions fills the air,  
The senses riot in a Bacchanal  
Of sights and sounds, — a Bagdad of the brain.

And through the grimy ruck there passes one  
Who sniffs his way along in open scorn.  
His hands are white although his heart is small;  
His cheeks are red although his soul is pale;  
And thus he drawls as on he mines by:  
“ What sweating, grasping humans — these I see,  
What sordid trade, what guile, what warped ideals,  
What gulfs between these lowly forms and me,  
The scion of the culture of the world,  
The master of the learning of the schools;  
‘Twixt them who grovel at the carts and me,  
The final product of the rolling centuries;  
How queer of garb and mien and speech they are,  
I’ll stoop to them and lift them to myself.”  
But on the thunder of the traffic booms along,  
The plodding peddlers shudder at his touch;  
The weary mothers crooning to their babes  
Are sightless to his offer and his hand;  
The children mock his very daintiness;  
And Rivington, uproarious and wild,  
In laughter, moaning, singing, sobs, — ignores  
The final product of the rolling centuries.  
“ Ungrateful dolts,” he scoffs, “ their coarseness  
Cannot grasp the higher things in Life,  
Nor can it feel the nobler strain in me.”

And now there comes along the crowded street  
Another — humble, modest, gentle-voiced,  
And from his eyes there gleams the flame of love:  
“ Oh, brothers, look above,” he mildly says,

“ The world is full of beauty, full of light,  
And life is filled with tender harmonies.  
The laughter born of fever, brethren, cease,  
And cease the silent crying of the heart,  
For yesterday is past; to-morrow lives for you! ”

And lo! By him a miracle is wrought:  
The thunder of the traffic dies away,  
The plodding peddlers straighten at his touch;  
The weary mothers crooning to their babes,  
Extend them to the lull of his caress;  
And Rivington, uproarious and wild  
In laughter, moaning, singing, sobs—acclaims  
The humble worker, reigning king of Love.

## SONG OF THE MOTOR CAR

A long, lean stretch of a grayish road  
For a lurching thing of steel;  
A vanishing strip of dust to the goad  
Of each swift pneumatic wheel.  
It speeds from Eternity straight through Space  
To a throttle's tug and strain,  
And hurtling along at a maddening pace  
Repeats in a frenzied refrain:

“ Speed!

Through a rushing wind in the dark of night,  
With the glare ahead of a giant light;  
Though your throat is choked with the clots of  
dust,  
Till I seem to fly over earth's dun crust,  
I demand as my meed  
Irresistible speed!”

A man bespattered with dirt and grime  
Bends over intent on his goal.  
He hearkens the beat of its thunderous time  
Controlling its impulse—its soul.  
His heart beats loud and his breath comes fast,  
In the throes of a joyous pain;  
The woods and the houses are scurrying past,  
As it grinds in a wild refrain:

“Speed!

While my limbs are tense with a pulsing might,  
Though my pace outstrip your human sight,  
For the joy there is in it—the ecstasy lent,  
Till my terrible force is completely spent,

I demand as my meed  
Irresistible speed!”

### THE PROBLEM PLAY

I heard the hero’s labored talk,  
His fervent declamation;  
I saw him pace the stage, and walk  
Its length in perturbation.  
Would she leave him, or he leave her?  
Had he the right to marry?  
Would both of them to part demur?  
Was it not wrong to tarry?

The critic with the sunken eye  
Explained the situation.  
His forehead bulged; a cultured sigh  
Showed cultured exaltation.  
A listless hearer at his side,  
Of intellect far baser,  
Exclaimed, “The problem’s not denied,  
But where on earth’s the play, sir?”

## DON'T KISS ME

John Thompson was a citizen  
Of credit and renown  
But when a grippé germ entered him  
It brought John Thompson down.

With febrifuge and germicide  
And healing herbs full score  
He fought the vicious little beast  
But still it vexed him sore.

And as he lay upon his cot  
He heard his doctor tell  
“ You may not kiss nor osculate  
Nor buss, till you are well.”

“ Nay, can you, John,” the doctor asked,  
“ Though this must cause you pain,  
Can you forego the fond embrace  
Of Mistress Mary Jane? ”

John Thompson was a cautious man,  
He knew the ways of germs,  
How fast they multiply and breed,  
The cruel, septic worms!

Bold resolution fired his eyes,  
He spoke as doth a man:  
“ When Duty whispers low, ‘ Thou must,’  
The youth replies, ‘ I can! ’ ”

She came not in the rosy dawn,  
She did not come at noon;  
His heart leaped up when in the eve,  
He heard her dainty shoon.

Compassion filmed her azure orbs,  
Her heart beat fast for fear;  
But ere she swooped on him with love,  
He murmured in her ear:

“ Don’t kiss me, darling Mary Jane,  
A foe is armed to kill us,  
The germ that bideth on my lips,  
The dreaded grippé bacillus.

Don’t kiss me, darling Mary Jane,”  
With gestures epileptic,  
The swain implored his darling lass,  
“ Until I’m antiseptic.”

And thus they bode till he was well,  
As prophylaxis fated;  
Unhugged, unbussed, unkissed, unstrung,  
Nonplussed, unosculated.

## SONG OF A SUBWAY CAR

“ A subway car was grinding along  
From stop to stop with a toil-worn throng;  
It growled as it sped through the narrow lane  
A dolorous tale to a dull refrain,

De-de-dun, de-de-dun;  
To an often-repeated dull refrain,  
De-de-dun, de-de-dun. . . .

“ I speed through a sinuous vault underground,  
Columned and pillared, rock-ribbed and round;  
And this is the song of my innermost ken,  
A song of women and sitting men,

De-de-dun, de-de-dun. . . .

“ A woman hangs by a strap and reels,  
A feverish flush her pallor conceals;  
She is weary with working, faint—but then  
Nothing is seen by my sitting men,  
My newspaper-staring, sitting men,

De-de-dun, de-de-dun. . . .

“ I stop with a jerk and the sweating guards  
Breast the stream that nothing retards;  
Out with 'em, in with 'em, off again,  
Shop-girls jostled and sitting men,  
Dull and expressionless sitting men,

De-de-dun, de-de-dun. . . .

“ I speed through a sinuous vault underground,  
Columned and pillared, rock-ribbed and round;  
A thing of steel, I strain and I sway,  
I am hollow and heartless but better than they —  
My rows of vacuous, sitting men,  
My newspaper-blinded, sitting men,  
De-de-dun, de-de-dun, . . . ”

### CONEY ISLAND ON SUNDAY—AN IMPRESSION

Pleasure parading with fife and drum,  
    Boom jig boom, boom jig boom!  
Won't you be merry, stranger? Come!  
    Boom jig boom, boom jig boom!  
Forget the troubles you have to tell  
On a bumpty bump or a carousel;  
Crooked or straight or tall or thin,  
Every one is a harlequin.  
Laughter is tipsy; joy is drunk.  
The treasure of Captain Kidd is sunk  
Deep in the wells of a maiden's eyes;  
The Golden Fleece of Jason lies  
Ready to seize in her throbbing heart;  
Argonaut bold from shop and mart,  
Reel into step for the golden quest  
And be as giddy as all the rest.  
Rat-a-tat-tat, rat-a-tat-tat,  
We should worry where we're at!  
Whoop-de-doo, whoop-de-doo!  
I'm silly myself, but so are you!

## THE CHILDREN'S ARMY

No tune of tootling fife,  
No beat of the rolling drum,  
And yet with the thrill of life  
    The hordes of children come.  
Freckled and chubby and lean,  
    Indifferent, good and bad,  
Bedraggled and dirty and clean,  
    Richly and poorly clad,  
They come on toddling feet  
    To the schoolhouse door ahead;  
The neighboring alley and street  
    Resound to the infant tread.  
Children of those who came  
    To the land of the promising West,  
Foreign of face and name,  
    Are shoulder to shoulder pressed  
With the youth of the native land  
    In the quest for truth and light,  
As the valorous little band  
    Trudges to left and right.  
Creed and color and race  
    Unite from the ends of the earth,  
Blending each noble trace  
    In the pride of a glorious birth.  
Race and hate and the past  
    Fuse in a melting heat

As the little hearts beat fast  
To the stir of a common beat.  
A fresher brawn and brain  
For the stock which the fates destroy  
Belong to the cosmic strain  
Of American girl and boy.

## SONG OF THE STADIUM

(*At the dedication of the stadium of the City College,  
May 29, 1915*)

The song of youth is calling us,  
The pipe of Pan entralling us—  
We hear the stirring echoes of a trumpet blast.  
It banishes the clod in us,  
It wakes the pagan god in us—  
We follow, follow, follow, for the heart beats fast!

The gates are open, open wide,  
And through them sweeps a steady tide  
Of youth—of youth and life;  
Their eyes are clear as woodland springs,  
Their sinews taut as arrow strings,  
Prepared for mimic strife.

In Rome each gladiator slave  
A grim salute to Cæsar gave:  
“ Before I die, I hail you! ”  
Your youth, O proud Metropolis,  
Had rather pledge you loud with this:  
“ Your sons shall never fail you! ”

“ We'll strive for you with might and main,  
We'll give you zeal of heart and brain,  
The uttermost we can;  
Your need shall be a rolling drum—  
Whene'er you want us, we will come!  
We pledge you to a man! ”

The song of youth is calling us,  
The pipe of Pan entralling us—  
We hear the stirring echoes of a trumpet blast;  
It banishes the clod in us,  
It wakes the pagan god in us—  
We follow, follow, follow, for the heart beats fast!

## SPRING AT THE FISH MARKET

Scene: Under the Williamsburg Bridge, lower  
East Side

Can it be that spring is stirring in the jostle of the  
mart,  
Through the clamor and the clatter at the bearded  
huckster's cart,  
Heard amid the dinning bicker of the women as  
they pass,  
Felt amidst the noise and bustle of the densely  
moving mass?  
Can it be that spring is present, softly breathing  
to the throng  
All the world-old passion music of a new world  
waking song.

Of a winter loosened river  
    Onward rushing merrily;  
Of the countryside a-quiver  
    With a vernal ecstasy;  
Of the lazy dreams a-fleeting  
    Through an open breezy sky,  
Of the human hearts a-beating  
    That the time of joy is nigh!

Strange it is, but in the jangle of the clanking  
metal seales,  
In the wearisome confusion of a hundred hurried  
sales,  
Wanders the enchanting goddess from the fields  
of oversea,  
And her voice is sweetest music as she whispers  
tenderly  
To the huddled men and women of the home-  
stead vale and stream,  
Conjuring a dear illusion with the pigments of a  
dream.

Of a foreign hamlet lying  
Near a grassy green expanse;  
Of a faintly tremored sighing  
In a wood of old romance;  
Of a land where life was duty  
To an emperor or king—  
Reawakened to the beauty  
Of a long-forgotten spring!

## SHOLOM ALEICHEM

*In Memoriam*

Peace be with you, gentle scrivener,  
    You who make the weary laugh,  
Though their backs are sorely burdened,  
    And they trudge with wander-staff.

Tears for you? No friend to sorrow  
    Is an author evermore  
Who can place a merry twinkle  
    Where a tear had gleamed before.

Glad you lived and glad you left us.  
    In your volumes filled with mirth  
Lives a never-failing solace  
    For the misery of earth.

Let us think of you with gladness;  
    Let us write of you with cheer;  
For your monument — a people  
    Laughing, laughing all the year.

## O. HENRY: IN MEMORIAM

*(Died June 5, 1910)*

In the twilight of the city, as I dreamed, as I  
dreamed,

Tangled shadows fell fantastic on the ever-  
pulsing street,

Little lights began to glimmer through the filmy  
veil of night

And I knew that work had ended by the home-  
ward-turning feet.

Then a tide of men and women rolled before me  
from the west,

Breaking over into houses, into hall and alley  
swirled;

Back from shop and store and work-room to the  
refuge of the home;

Through the sluices of the city beat the power  
of the world.

And I wished I had his vision — he who saw and  
understood,

As he watched the men and women on the stage  
of everyday,

All the wrangling and the toiling and the bungling  
of the cast,

While it potters through the æons in the great  
Creation Play.

How I longed to sense the meaning of the God  
behind it all,  
Of the spirit as it brightens through the coarsest human flesh,  
Of the music, sweetly hidden in the roaring city  
din,  
Of the single purpose showing in the tangle of  
the mesh.

Far below me boomed the thunder and the tidal  
wave beat high.  
On its crest I saw the nummers of the passing  
comedy;  
Shopgirls, idlers, peddlers, salesmen, errand-boys  
with lagging feet,  
Kind and sad and hostile faces in the swelling  
human sea.  
And in each I felt a story worthy of the master's  
skill,  
Sensed the presence of the passions that control  
the human breast,  
Knew an epic lived within them, dumbly waiting  
to be told,  
But a mind that knew the meaning slept in its  
eternal rest.

What a world he left behind him, what a web of  
wonder tales,  
Fact and fiction subtly woven on the spinning  
wheel of Truth!

How he caught the key of living in the noises of  
the town,  
Major music, minor dirges, rhapsodies of Age  
and Youth!  
In the twilight of the city, as I dreamed, as I  
dreamed,  
Watching that eternal drama in the ever-  
pulsing street,  
All about me seemed to murmur of the master  
passed away,  
And his requiem was sounded in the city's fever  
beat.

## TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I have twisted my phrases and words,  
In a spirit that pries and destroys,  
As children who potter and prod  
To solve their mechanical toys;  
Till, tired at my arabesque turns,  
My pen sputters back at my brain.  
I hungrily gaze at my screed,  
But the Critic within me cries, "Vain!"

In the dark of my doubt, as I toil,  
Like one melting dross in a mould,  
To banish my base-flowing slag  
And change it, as you did, to gold;  
I conjure Samoa, the isle  
Where your tomb meets the breeze of the sea;  
Tusitala, my dearly beloved,  
I turn to you, yearning my plea:

Defend me from forfeiting Hope,  
From fashioning wares for the mart;  
Inspire me, my master, to write  
With the red of the blood of my heart.  
In the darkness that comes to us all,  
When our world is a Stygian night,  
When we hesitate, stumble and reel,  
O lend me, my brother, thy light!

## EDGAR ALLAN POE

And wan with listless watching, Hecate  
Beheld a student in a chamber dim  
Invoke the bard. It was a votary  
Whose chant to strains of hidden cherubim  
Came low and mournful through the moonlit air  
To echo in the caves of blind Despair.

“ Awake, thou matchless bard of Shadowland!  
Of women wondrous beautiful, but pale,  
Of dreams alive; of cities on a strand,  
Illumed by phosphor seas; of Woe and Wail;  
Divine musician, rend the earth and shake  
Thy deathly slumber off — Awake! Awake!

“ I long to hear the song of lost Lenore,  
In haunting rhymes and liquid measures sung,  
To sense thy mighty soul in grief outpour  
A wild lament for her who died so young.  
I bid that Death his gruesome work unmake,  
I bid thee rise to Life — Awake! Awake!

“ I crave the tremor of thy breathing lyre  
That mourns eternally for Doom and Sin,  
That sings of keen regret and vain desire  
As softly sweet as muted violin.  
Defy the sway of haughty Death and take  
Thy place with us again — Awake! Awake!

“ A longing mad I feel my soul consume  
To wander forth with thee, where brooding  
dwell  
Thy dear ones, Eulalie and Ulalume;  
Thy loved ones, Elinor and Annabel.  
In suppliant tone for mine and their sweet sake  
I rouse thee from thy sleep—Awake! Awake!”

But wan with listless watching, Hecate  
Beheld the student beat his troubled breast,  
For thus a vagrant wind that wandered free  
With plaintive tone into his ear confessed,  
An ancient wind that knew the days of yore,  
“ The bard you seek shall meet you — never-  
more.”

## JOSEF ISRAELS: IN MEMORIAM

(1824-1911)

When the fisher-folk of the Netherland coast  
On perilous cruises sped,

When the howling wind and the swirling foam  
A message of danger read—

There was one to measure the dread of the sea  
For the helpless women then,

Whose bread was found on the crest of the wave  
By the sturdy fishermen.

There was one to read the cry of the heart,  
As it sobbed to the lonely stone,

On the mound of the man who came no more,  
Who left her all alone—

Alone to the wind and the sea and the storm  
That had claimed their murderous fill;

Alone to the break of the taunting deep  
And a cottage, void and still.

There was one to sound the plumb of despair  
In the wandering martyr race

That flies with the wind in the fearful round  
Of an everlasting chase;

To note the patient shoulder shrug,  
The pathos of mind and eye,

In the form of the man with the mortal wounds,  
Who yet disdains to die.

Be good to the soul of the master, Lord,  
Who limned with a deathless hand,  
The woes of the men whose mettle you try —  
The waifs of the sea and the land.  
Be good to his artist soul, O Lord,  
For he ate of the bread of tears  
And drank from the bitter cup of those  
Who count the leaden years.

## THE "SPRING POEM" SATIRIST

*Dedicated to Thomas R. Ybarra*

Ybarra spilled a can of ink  
Upon a budding little leaf  
And watched the tiny body shrink  
With grief.

A poet passed, and pitying  
The victim of his brother's spleen,  
Wept over it, and lo! — the thing  
Turned green!

Ybarra threw a surly blot  
Across a cloudless, Maytime sky  
And jeered to see the frowning spot  
Grow dry.

The poet moaned the base assault  
As from his faithful lyre he drew  
Such plaintive sobs that soon the vault  
Turned blue!

Ybarra caught a vagrant breeze,  
In which he jabbed a cruel pen  
To see if Zephyrs die with ease,  
But then

The poet healed the smarting breast  
With balsam from a vernal spray  
So well, it freshened toward the West  
Away.

Now, what's the use, Ybarra, dear,  
Of being churlish? Come and sing  
Like all the rest of us who cheer  
“To Spring!”

## MAY RHAPSODY

Springtime has come with her whispering gladness

Susurrant Zephyrs sighing of bloom,  
Yielding me ecstasies kin unto madness,

Flambeaux of incense a heart to consume;  
Breathing of happiness,  
Laughing with happiness,

Fragrant and rosy and banishing gloom.

Fresh as the Dawn that in primitive glory  
Blushed with affright at the vision of Man,

Dewy as morn in Arthurian story,  
Brimming with life as when Knighthood began,

Bubbling with merriment,  
Bounding with merriment,

Springtime advances to linger a span.

Over her tresses a chaplet of flowers

Carelessly twined and a trifle askew,

Sprinkled with drops of her opulent showers

Or wet with the glittering touch of the dew;

Wondrously beautiful,

Wild-eyed and beautiful,

Trembling with joy at a World that is new.

Love is her boon to the soul-weary mortal,  
    Love but a dream-enthralled being may know,  
Wafting him back to the Paradise Portal,  
    Lending him pinions to rise over Woe;  
        Scattering violets,  
        Pansies and violets,  
Faint with delights of a sweet Long-Ago.

## ROSEMARY AND RUE

The leaves have fallen. Overhead  
    The ghostly trees are bare;  
In brown and red, on lowly bed  
    A clan is sleeping there.  
Perchance the solitary leaf  
    That flutters in the blast  
Recalls in quiverings of grief  
    The brilliant summer passed.

The song of roses calls in vain  
    And leaves for me and you  
A haunting, sober, sweet refrain  
    Of rosemary and rue,  
Of rue and rosemary, my love,  
    Of rosemary and rue.

In vain for mortal heart and way  
The fervent plighted vow!  
The verdant spray of yesterday  
Is sere and withered now.  
Perhaps the motley, fallen rout  
Remembers how, in spring,  
It rustled promises devout  
Unto the branch to cling.

And now the song of wind and rain  
Is bringing me and you  
A haunting, sober, sweet refrain  
Of rosemary and rue,  
Of rue and rosemary, my love,  
Of rosemary and rue.

## THE HOMECOMING

I roam the highways over and over  
For the wisp of a gleam that leads me;  
I trample the dust in the noon-day sun  
And call — but it never heeds me;  
I follow the gold to the slumbering west  
Where the road and the sky arch play,  
But the wisp of a dream on the border line  
Eludes me — it will not stay.

For a man may fail to find the trail  
That leads to his heart's desire,  
But on he must through mud and dust  
From dawn to evening fire.

But who is this in the highway standing,  
She with the eyes that call me?  
I am tired of the road, the sinuous road,  
Her laughing eyes enthrall me.  
I long for the feel of her cooling hand  
On my hair and my throbbing brow;  
Then take my love, O wife of my dreams,  
I would cease my wandering now.

For we can not fail to find the trail  
That leads to our heart's desire,  
If love as guide with us abide  
From dawn to evening fire.

## RAIN SONG

Many a time in the æons past  
I swished to the whip of the northern blast;  
I romped in the sleet and rejoiced in the hail,  
Fled with the whirlwind and danced with the gale.

Gently I fell to the crooning springs,  
Benison bringing on watery wings;  
Soft as the hand of a mother caressing  
I fondled the earth and gave it my blessing.

Now as I fall, though I patter of sorrow,  
I whisper the hope of a new tomorrow.  
Every drop of me reaching the sod  
Carries the grace and the pity of God.

## TO A POET ON HIS TRAVELS

Gently, Wind,  
Temper thy stroke;  
Shake the leaves  
On the giant oak;  
But spare the bard  
In the threadbare cloak.

Softly, Rain,  
Fall on the heath;  
Be kind to the wayfaring  
Men beneath;  
And most to a lad  
With a poet's wreath.

Guide him, Moon,  
With a friendly ray,  
When he wanders at night  
Lilting a lay,  
To find in the dark  
His chosen way.

Grant him, Wood,  
In thy arbors dim,  
Shelter in peril  
Of life or limb;  
The love of a people  
He bears with him.

# AN ANCIENT RACE



## THE SON OF AN ANCIENT RACE

*Suggested by a painting of the same name, the work  
of Josef Israels, in the Rijks Museum, Amster-  
dam.*

A gas-lit gloom oppresses the shop,  
The air is heated and stale;  
Persistent machines without a stop  
Rehearse a monotonous tale.  
Before his task in a reverie,  
As the wheels drone on apace,  
There pauses a scion of destiny,  
The son of an ancient race.

He dreams . . . that the Lord in the vanguard goes  
And blazes a triumph-trail  
Of woe and defeat for Israel's foes!  
A million voices hail  
In pæans of praise the glory of God!  
A glow illumines the face  
Of the heir to the fat of the conquered sod,  
The son of an ancient race.

And then alone through the dark, long years  
He totters with timorous tread;  
Alone, the prey of a thousand fears,

He learns to droop his head;  
From the height of his pride he is downward  
    hurled  
    To reel from place to place,  
Mock of the nations and butt of the world,  
    The son of an ancient race.

The flesh pots of Egypt . . . then liberty,  
    Ambition, might, disdain,  
And then . . . a cycle of misery,  
    A welter of blood and pain.  
Will Israel's moan at the scourge of the rod,  
    As it echoes far through space,  
Some day invoke the grace of God  
    For the son of an ancient race?

## HOW LONG, O LORD!

In the weary night they come to me,  
The tears that I left unshed,  
When I trudged the thorny wilderness  
With the sun-flame overhead.  
I lie awake in the friendly night,  
My soul too numb to pray,  
Enjoying the cool of its velvet black  
In the dread of the coming day.

For the day must come and the sting of it,  
As I bend to the endless road,  
The light must come and the pain of it,—  
The bite of the lashing goad.  
But this I know as I reel along  
To the nations' hue and cry,  
A burning truth in the hand of God:  
I know that I must not die.

They say my soul is twisted and warped,  
My ways are cringing and mean,  
That I worship the bulk of the calf of gold,  
That my hands are not white and clean;  
They say — but a thousand reasons hold  
To stalk the quarry then  
When the lust for blood is hunger-felt  
By the beast that dwells in men.

When Kindness is taught at the end of a rope,  
And Love to the music of groans;  
When Charity masks in a cloak of flame,  
And Mercy in falling stones,—  
What wonder the balm for the spirit fails  
When the wounds are kept so fresh  
Through countless years of active hate  
In the rack of the tortured flesh?

I have ceased to long for the clasp of Love,  
To dream of the smile of a friend,  
I grip my trusty wander-staff  
In a journey without an end.  
My faith is strong as the primal rocks,  
And deep as my tearless woes;  
I am Job of the nations—heir of wrongs,  
But why—Jehovah knows.

## THE OTHER CHEEK

*(From a Jewish standpoint)*

Songs of hate for the newly stressed!

We who have borne the burden long  
Scorn the feverish heat and zest

That finds a vent in poisoned song.  
Blood ye take when the foe retreats,  
Blood ye get when the foe breaks through.  
Whatever the message the drummer beats,  
It's hell for us and blood for you.

The star of David is dyed in gore,  
Maccabee's daughters droop in shame;  
Whatever the tale the cannons roar  
For you, for us it is still the same.  
At the shrine of God we pray for you,  
We, the weakest and strongest of men;  
On the fields of death we slay for you  
Our very kin — and you slay us then.

If we should curse you, as you deserve,  
If we should loose our burden of ire;  
Planets would falter, suns would swerve,  
Earth be swept by volcanic fire;  
But we who crossed the Red Sea trail  
When Egypt's star began to dim  
Will live to see your hatred fail  
As Pharaoh's did when he mocked at Him.

We who have borne the scourge of Rome  
Deem that your puny vaunts are vain;  
Eternal rocks to the angry foam,  
We weathered the proud caprice of Spain.  
Ye may wound us sore till our bleeding hearts  
Conjure death as a blessing, still  
By the law of laws your venomous darts,  
Though rankle they must, can never kill.

God of Gideon, David and Saul,  
God of the prophet's holy tears;  
Thou who markest the sparrow's fall,  
Thou who hast led us thousands of years,  
Grant to us when they smite our cheek  
To turn the other to them and smile,  
For we shall live though our lives they seek,  
But they are dying all the while.

## THE BANNER OF GOD

*This is a struggle of democracy against autocracy.*  
—Theme of President Wilson's address.

The deathless eye of Israel  
Beheld beneath the skies,  
Ash-gray with battle smoke and death,  
Another banner rise.

And, floating high above the pall,  
That standard seemed to be  
The word of God revealed to man  
By ancient prophecy.

“Through fire,” it sang, “come follow me!  
The life Almighty gave  
Had better far go back to Him  
Than dwell in any slave.”

“Through blood-red mist,” it chanted loud,  
“My soul exultant sings  
The pæan of all that is to be,  
The dirge and doom of kings.”

“Beat down,” it called, “whatever binds—  
Your shackles, bolts and bars.  
The dawn’s pure blush is in my stripes,  
God’s hope is in my stars!”

The heart of Israel surged high  
As does the wind-blown sea;  
“ My flag! ” he cried, “ I pledge to you  
My deathless fealty! ”

## ISRAEL'S BURDEN

Eyes like balls of molten madness stare and stare  
the livelong night,  
Reading what the fancy conjures with the dawn  
of morning light.

Wraiths of humans fleeing, fleeing . . . moaning  
an eternal "Why?"  
Plod along deserted highways under sun and  
star-lit sky.

Fields, though seamed with many furrows, bear  
no crop for farm and town,  
Over them the death-clouds hover like a mist-  
gray mourning gown.

Messengers of fate vibrating through the sulphur-  
laden air  
Hum their hymns of hate unending and their  
echo moans despair.

Israel! For thee the reaper sweeps his scythe on  
hill and plain;  
His the harvest of thy children and thy tears are  
all in vain.

Whether in thy heart be Kaiser or the call of La  
Patrie,  
Whether fighting stanch for England or the land  
that slaughters thee,

Thine the heavy, heavy burden; thine the toll of  
lives to pay,  
Thine the martyrdom of ages; thine a night that  
knows no day.

If thy sorrow does not touch me, if thy pangs but  
leave me cold,  
If thy oft-recurring story seems a tale too often  
told,

If I read thy plea for succor, dull to sense what  
others bear,  
Blind to all but self and callous how my luckless  
brothers fare,

Shake my soul, O Lord, with thunder; wring my  
heart with pity-spell;  
Make me feel in this, my refuge, all the woe of  
Israel.

Else the trumpet of the morrow, shrilling forth  
the nobler day,  
Will reveal my soul to judgment, sere and shriv-  
elled, worn away.

ON THE OCCASION OF MR. SCHIFF'S  
BIRTHDAY, JANUARY 10TH, 1917

Israel rose from the cinders of sorrow,  
Proud in her grief; her voice was mild;  
“ Men like you shape the new to-morrow,”  
She said to her favorite son — and smiled.

“ Men like you are the world's salvation;  
They bless the spot wherever they be;  
For them a pæan of all creation  
Sounds high praise on land or sea.

“ Giant soul! In the world's mad blindness  
You see to heal its pangs and smarts;  
You sow the seeds of human kindness,  
You reap the harvest of thankful hearts.”

## THE KINGDOM OF POLAND

*An eternal wanderer speaks*

Lo! As I flee through the highways of men, on  
Time's immemorial sphere,  
Phantasms come and phantasms go, but a dom-  
inant plan is clear.

Whenever a soul dies, shrivelled up, or a nation  
dries at the heart,  
They are each swept back by the Maker of All to  
the darkness where all things start.

I have eaten bread to the sting of a lash and fled  
from the terror of flame;  
I have wandered and suffered, wept and prayed —  
but that way Wisdom came.

I have learned to laugh at the tyrant's goad, the  
oppressor's bloody urge;  
As he tortured me I mocked at him and sang his  
funeral dirge.

I knew he was wrong and could not last, that he  
could not change the plan  
Made by the Changeless Powers That Be for the  
slow ascent of Man;

For his gradual climb from chaos-depth to the clearness of upper air,  
For his rise to the sun of harmony from the slime of hate's despair.

Nations, like pilgrim-knights, may fare on a quest where weaklings fail;  
When they raise the sword of truth and right, they find the Holy Grail.

When they flash the brand of bigotry, when their hearts are false, unjust,  
Instead of the holy cup of Christ, they see but clouds of dust.

There is room to spare for kingdoms on earth — but the cry of the blood-soaked sod  
Is not for another tyrant state, but a merciful kingdom of God.

Poland! Poland! Kneel to be crowned, but rise prepared for the test,  
The joust of the ages in every clime for the cause of Man's oppressed.

Poland! Poland! Arm for the fray, unshackled, God-like, free;  
Become the anointed champion of all who plod like me.

Of all who creep through the weary days to the  
    dreams of a sleepless night,  
Fearing the dark, but fearing more the dawn and  
    the tell-tale light.

If not — like the rest of things outworn, nations  
    or creeds or men,  
Back you must go to the bottomless pit and there  
    start over again.

## **THE GREAT STRUGGLE**



## SONG OF THE VOLGA BOATMEN

Drift, logs, drift, down the swift stream;  
    Float, logs, float, beyond the Port o' Dream.  
The sunlight pats my Luba's cheeks  
    And makes them glow like wine;  
The breeze brings fragrance once again  
    From cedar, birch, and pine.  
A dirge-song died upon the wind  
    That dried my Luba's tears;  
Her lips are dumb with answered prayer,  
    Her eyes with banished fears.

*Batyushka Gosudar,  
Wan wanes thy setting star.  
Fallen art thou, Great White Czar.*

Turn logs, turn, through the foam and swirl;  
Glide, logs, glide, along the white whirl.  
    For me my Luba sits and waits,  
    For me a feast is spread:  
No more like wolf-hound lean and lone  
    Must I devour my bread.  
The jingling cow-bells tinkle pæans  
    Of home and joy to me;  
My heart leaps God-ward like the blaze  
    That set my Russia free!

*Batyushka Gosudar,  
Wan wanes thy setting star.  
Fallen art thou, Great White Czar.*

## CHANT OF LOYALTY

Firm as the furnace heat  
Rivets the bars of steel,  
Thus to thy destiny,  
Flag, are we plighted;  
One are the hearts that beat,  
One is the throb we feel,  
One in our loyalty,  
Stand we united.

Many a folk have brought  
Sinew and brawn to thee;  
Many an ancient wrong  
Well hast thou righted;  
Here in the land we sought,  
Stanchly, from sea to sea,  
Here, where our hearts belong,  
Stand we united.

Ask us to pay the price,  
All that we have to give,  
Nothing shall be denied,  
All be requited;  
Ready for sacrifice,  
Ready for thee to live,  
Over the country wide,  
Stand we united.

## THE GREAT STRUGGLE 89

One under palm and pine,  
One in the prairie sun,  
One on the rock-bound shore,  
    Liberty-sighted;  
All that we have is thine,  
Thine, who hast made us one,  
True to thee evermore,  
    Stand we united.

### LET THERE BE LIGHT!

*(Dedicated to the proposed Statue of Liberty that will be presented by the people of America to the people of Russia)*

Over the land that the Cossack had harried,  
    Over the realm that a tyrant had wrung,  
Verst upon verst let the glad news be carried,  
    League upon league let the tidings be sung.  
        The voice of the people,  
        Mightier far  
    Than the mandate of  
        Emperor, Sultan or Czar,  
Has spoken the word  
    That has banished the night,  
Has thundered in majesty,  
    “Let there be light!”

Grant them, O Lord, who have drunk deep of sorrow,  
The cup of good-will that will toast their release;  
Them who have hungered in fear, on the morrow  
Blessings of plenty and bounty of peace.  
The wings of the raven  
Had darkened their days,  
Hiding the sun  
And its comforting rays;  
But now that the bird  
Of ill-omen, in flight  
Has vanished forever,  
Let there be light!

We who have felt with them all of their sadness,  
We who have marvelled the patience that bore  
Knut, sword and fire, the devices of madness,  
Send them a beacon from liberty's shore.  
And they who had faltered  
In darkness and dread  
May fearlessly venture  
To struggle ahead.  
The torch-flare of freedom  
Must guide them aright;  
America calls to them  
“Let there be light!”

SONG OF THE U-BOAT

I am blind of heart,  
I am blind of soul;  
But I creep like life  
To a destined goal.  
Through the nether sweep  
Of the crafty deep  
I forge my way,—  
No ripple above  
My course to betray.

I am charged with death,  
I am charged with hate;  
And oh for the ship  
In my line of fate!  
Her timbers rock  
To the thud and shock;  
She sinks below:  
My masterpiece  
Of red, red woe!

When Death will yield  
To Love and Life,  
When the Law of God  
Will banish Strife,  
I shall haunt the sea  
Like an unpurged sin  
But the fish will stare  
At me—and grin.

## TO THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

*On the occasion of its Illumination, December 2nd*

Pityingly, O Mother of Light,  
You darted long rays  
Into our darkness,  
Calling to us as we wept  
Or as we cowered in self-abasement.  
“Come to me!” you said,  
“Poor pawns in the game of royalty,  
Come to me and learn once more  
That man is made in the image of God.”

We came, O Mother of Light!  
From shores innumerable we came  
In droves like the beasts of the field.  
We came ignorant, blinded, crippled,  
Our tears still fresh on our cheeks,  
The lash print red on our backs.  
We came crouching in terror.  
You quickened our fear-palsied souls  
With messages of hope and courage.  
You bade us trample on our fetters,  
And stand erect before the world.

We swear to you, O Mother of Light,  
That we, your foster-children,  
Freemen knighted by the grace of God,  
Will keep your arm forever lifted,  
Your torch forever burning!

THE CRY OF HUMANITY

(*A reply to "The Cry of France" in The Times of August 19*)

"Welcome their hordes  
To glut our swords."

*Joseph I. C. Clarke.*

I am Humanity  
Calling through the ages  
To all of you, my children!  
Who are the hordes  
That glut your swords?  
Are those the guilty ones  
Whose lifeblood overruns  
The guttered fields of France?  
Hell's banner flutters wide  
As all of you advance.  
The Teuton's dogged drive,  
The Briton's bulldog pull,  
The Slav's determined trudge,  
The gallant dash of France—  
What mean they all to me,  
Bereft Humanity?  
For I must mourn you all,  
My children you who fall.

If one who wears a crown  
Gives way to ghastly whim,  
Must millions, battered down,  
Be sacrificed to him?

I am Humanity  
Calling through the ages  
To all of you, my children!  
Listen to your hearts  
And send your flaming darts  
Against the whole array  
Who herded you for fray!  
You need not seek for hordes  
To glut your willing swords.  
Turn plague and sword and fire,  
Turn all your pent-up ire  
Upon the few  
Who slaughter you.  
Turn hell and pest and flame  
On those who play the game,  
On those whose royal will  
Sent all of you to kill.

I am Humanity  
Calling through the ages  
To all of you, my children!

MEN

I see them in a vision.  
They are masters of death.  
I see them  
Laying mines  
To annihilate thousands;  
Sighting intrenchments  
To guide their gun play;  
Unleashing deadly gases  
Wind driven, toward the enemy.  
I see them in a vision,  
These masters of death;  
Not beasts snorting hell fire  
Are they;  
Just men—  
Strong men, brave men,  
Good men, wise men,  
All bent on achieving—death.

I see them before me.  
They are masters of life.  
I see them  
Digging tunnels  
For the transit of thousands;  
Rearing wonder structures of steel  
To shelter their own kind;

In their laboratories  
Enslaving air, water, earth and fire  
For the service of millions.  
I see them before me,  
These masters of life;  
Not angels shining in celestial glory  
Are they;  
Just men—  
Strong men, brave men,  
Good men, wise men,  
All bent on promoting—life.

Men—just men.

TO WAR BARDS

Please note, my friend  
Of lyric trend,  
That cannon "boom"  
To "gloom" or "doom;"  
But when they "roar"  
They roar of "war;"  
That balls will "burst"  
To rhymes like "curst;"  
That men will "fall"  
When countries "call;"  
That flowing "blood"  
Suggests a "flood;"  
That "hopes of peace"  
Will go with "cease."

But try to sell  
The stuff, and — Well,  
You'll know instead  
What Sherman said.

## SEA WAIFS

Salt fresh is the breeze from the sea;  
Brine sharp is its buoyant caress;  
It speeds the foam shoreward in glee,  
There is joy in its call, wild and free,  
“La jeunesse! La jeunesse!”

“Youth,” it is laughing, “I bring  
On the hollow and crest of the surge;  
And I carry the tang of the spring  
In the spume that I scatter and fling,  
Yet my heart is a dirge!

“For voices of children I hear  
In the boom of the oncoming waves;  
Voices that cry to me clear  
From the heart of the turbulent mere,  
From their kelp covered graves.

“‘Breeze of the sea!’ from the tide  
Their pitiful voices ring,  
‘Take us with you for a ride,  
We are the babies who died  
Too young to know spring!’”

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Where do we stand? Perhaps the answer leads  
Us back to days of old, to stubborn years  
When power over soil and men through deeds  
Of pluck was won by gallant pioneers.

They met their doubts and perils face to face.

The savage skulked within his wilds, but soon  
The builders, sowers, reapers took his place.

May we fall short of Standish, Smith and  
Boone?

Where do we stand? Injustice oversea  
Constrained our kin to rally and to arm;  
We gathered hosts to fight for liberty  
From forge and shop, from forest, field, and  
farm.

We had our rustic leaders, Putnams, Waynes,  
A troop of daring volunteers, and one  
Who led them all through many grim campaigns.  
Has time erased the name of Washington?

Where do we stand? In civil strife we fought  
For what we each regarded true and right;  
And when, at last, the boon of peace was bought,  
We each repaired the breaches made in fight.  
A sorry struggle, but it left the land  
In stronger union, blood-cemented, game,  
The curse of slavery forever banned,  
A monument to Lincoln's hallowed name.

Where do we stand? Look back upon them all.  
What stirring feelings can these names inspire!  
They key our hearts to throb at danger's call,  
They fill our veins with patriotic fire.  
How can we help but stand for dangers met,  
For rights defended—liberty, forsooth,  
For all the virtues troubled times beget?  
Our heroes teach us courage, freedom, truth!

### DEMOS: A RHAPSODY

*(Suggested by the Russian Renaissance)*

Lo! In the welter of storms they shall hear him,  
Shaking the earth with his terrible voice;  
Lo! In the chaos of hell they shall fear him;  
Masters will tremble and bondmen rejoice!  
Dumb through the cycle of numberless ages,  
Unable to falter, unable to speak,—  
At last like the beasts in their murderous rages  
Battering bars of the hindering cages,  
Demos will rouse himself . . . Demos will  
shriek!

Then all the little men,  
Those who had prodded him,  
Those who had mocked at him,

## THE GREAT STRUGGLE 101

Fat little men who had held him in scorn,  
Bald little men who had smugly dictated,  
Mustachioed men who had strutted and prated,  
Uniformed men who had shouted, commanded,  
Men in black robes who had flouted and  
branded,—

All of them hearing  
The voice of the giant,  
Obeying and fearing  
His mandate defiant,

Dreading his gaunt, inarticulate being,—

All of them . . . fleeing,  
Unheeding, unseeing,

Shedding their robes and their sceptres and uniforms

Casting aside all their honors and mummeries,  
Flim-flam and flummuries  
Trappings and state,

Downward will drop through the swift-rushing  
darkness

Leagues and leagues . . . where eternities wait!

And then from their caverns the millions will  
creep,

Wan wraiths of humans  
Aroused from their sleep,  
Reeling in hunger . . . frightened, unsteady,  
Limp and unready.

Demos will eroon to them  
Just like a mother  
Soothing her little one  
Crying in sleep.

“Gone are the creatures  
Of wars and disasters;  
Fled are your overlords  
Crowned heads and masters.

Pick up their robes and their sceptres and uniforms;  
Gather their honors, their symbols and mummuries,  
Flim-flam and flummuries,  
All that you trembled at, worn by your ‘sires,’  
Pile them and kindle them;  
Let all the fears you nursed  
Vanish in prayer with the smoke of your fires.”

“But who are you, O mysterious giant,  
Pleading in thunder?  
You who have roused us to life from the grave;  
You who have cloven the chains of the slave;  
Who are you that you should be obeyed?  
Tell us . . . we know not . . . we’re weak and afraid.”

“Who am I?  
By all that is broken  
Shattered and crushed,  
By all that you hope for,  
By all that you deem  
God-like and holy,  
Know you not me?  
I am the voice of you,  
I am the goal of you,  
Brawn, bones and blood of you,  
Heart, mind and soul of you . . .  
I am your dream!”

## THE LIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN

I walked through the darkling meadows  
In the valley;  
Slow-stepping, head bowed, I plodded on,  
Unmindful of the shadows  
That kept snuffing out the last glimmerings of day,  
Leaving on earth only night,  
Only night.

There was night within me, too,  
I seemed to see millions of imploring hands  
Raised high in prayer;  
“Our backs are heavy laden, O Lord,  
Our strength is spent;  
In Thy infinite mercy have pity on us,  
Thy children!”  
I seemed to see anguish limned on faces  
Too rigid-set for tears.  
And as I walked through the darkling meadows  
In the valley,  
There was night in me, too.

Then I looked up at the scarred mountain side  
Looming high above me;  
And the giant cliffs were silhouetted  
Athwart the waning daylight.

This, thought I, is reality.  
Against it Man pounds his poor, soft fists;  
And up to its top he looks for light;  
But there is no light.

As I mused thus,  
From the very peak  
A ray of friendly lamplight  
Filtered through the darkness.  
It came from the window of a little shack  
On the mountain side  
And sought me out  
Depressed and sore with doubt  
As I wandered in the valley below.

Perhaps, thought I, that is God's way.  
His will remains inscrutable  
Though our woes be many;  
But somewhere from His pinnacle  
He sends down a gleam of hope  
To us, who struggle on,  
In the darkness of the world valley  
As we pass from one infinity  
To the other.

## CALIBAN TO THE WAR-GOD

One eye that peeps above the ocean plane,  
    My periscope, to sight a victim nigh;  
And then, a steady crawling on; in vain  
    She flies ahead; I mark her; she must die.

I chuckle when I see those merchant hulks  
    Loom up to such dimensions. Little me  
Is big enough for them; their clumsy bulks  
    Will soon be rotting deep within the sea.

A funny thing occurred the other day;  
    I crushed a liner's bow; she dropped like stone  
And on her decks you should have seen the way  
    Those mortals paled; I laughed to hear them  
        groan.

I did it all, my master, just for you.  
    A trifle! Caliban will play his part  
To suit your will, augustness, sparing few  
    For, like yourself, your servant has no heart.

## THE GREAT STRUGGLE 107

### NOCTURNE

“ Watcher in the trenches,  
How wears the night? ”

“ Nothing is seen in the midnight sky  
But the trail of the death rockets flashing by:  
So wears the night.”

“ Watcher in the trenches,  
How wears the night? ”

“ A form in the starlight gasping its last,  
The tail of a meteor shimmering past:  
So wears the night.”

“ Watcher in the trenches,  
How wears the night? ”

“ Darkness, darkness, then afar  
The sudden glare of a man-made star:  
So wears the night.”

“ Watcher in the trenches,  
How wears the night? ”

“ Dawn flares up in the bloody east,  
The vultures swoop to a carrion feast:  
So wears the night.”

“ Dreamer in the tower,  
How will it end? ”

“ The mists are shrouding a red, red sun,  
Humans are blind and only One  
May know the end.”



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